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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 002031

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE (HOH/FOOKS), NSC FOR BRAUN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PINR](#) [FUN](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIA - ADMONISHING TIHIC TO SPLIT WITH SILAJDZIC ON POLICE REFORM

REF: SARAJEVO 1987

Classified By: CDA Judith B. Cefkin. Reasons 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Charge delivered a strong message to SDA President Sulejman Tihic to compromise on police reform so that Bosnia-Herzegovina could initial a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. Tihic related his negative views of the current OHR police reform protocol (reftel) and insisted High Representative Miroslav Lajcak would have to accept SDA-proposed changes. Tihic stressed that without such concrete concessions he cannot break from his party's joint position with Haris Silajdzic's SBiH. Tihic specifically expressed concern about the RS role in the budgeting process and how centralized the police command structure would be in practice, but did not offer specific proposals for addressing those concerns. At the technical talks SDA has focused on going back to the Martens Report and Police Reform Directorate Report, but this would involve completely redrafting the Lajcak proposal, which OHR is unprepared to do. Tihic will have to present something much more reasonable to Lajcak if he has any intention of breaking with Silajdzic and reaching a deal on police reform. End Summary

Strong Message to Tihic

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¶2. (C) Charge Judith B. Cefkin delivered a strong message to SDA President Sulejman Tihic on the need to compromise on police reform. In conjunction with the current OHR strategy (reftel) to promote a police reform agreement, Charge expressed US concern about SDA and SBiH joint criticism of Lajcak's police reform proposal. Charge reiterated to Tihic that failure to reach a police reform deal would mean a negative progress report from the EC and prevent Bosnia's initialing of a Stabilization and Associations Agreement for a long period of time. She reiterated our support for the Lajcak proposal. Tihic must choose between integration and isolation. If he was interested in integration then he must distance himself from SBiH's hard-line stance on police reform and support the Lajcak proposal.

Tihic on the Lajcak Plan

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¶3. (C) Tihic explained that he genuinely thinks the Lajcak proposal is a bad plan that steps away from the three EC principles and legalizes 80% of the existing police

structure. He fears that the convoluted plan including provisions for consensus and ethic voting would not be functional in practice. He also lamented the plan's many concessions to the RS including giving the RS National Assembly a role in budgeting as well as allowing an additional layer of police administration in the RS. Tihic also fears that Assistant Police Directors for local police areas on RS, Federation, and Brcko District territories will in fact run their police areas independently rather than take orders from the State-Level police Director.

¶4. (C) Since Tihic himself does not believe in the Lajcak plan, he says he cannot defend it to others. However, he plans to meet High Representative Lajcak on September 22 and will present SDA suggestions for improvement. Tihic asserted that he could only break with Silajdzic over police reform if he had concrete reasons to do so, such as OHR acceptance of SDA improvements for police reform. Tihic lamented that he lost the last election due to his willingness to compromise and that the ordinary voters support Silajdzic, including his current opposition to the Lajcak plan. Tihic stressed that the SAA is important but it would be a mistake to legalize a poor policing structure, which we be the first time since Dayton that such a poor solution was legalized. He also raised the issue of post-war crimes and failings of the RS police, including attempts to hide mass graves and failure to catch those who murdered returnees.

Comment

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¶5. (C) Tihic understood the implications of our message and seemed to be torn between his desire to go forward for the

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sake of the SAA and his fear of backlash from acceding to a plan he views as flawed. If Tihic plans to seek major changes to the Lajcak plan, which he knows are unlikely to be accepted, he may be attempting to shift the blame for failure of police reform talks onto the HighRep. Even if some changes were accepted, it is still unclear to us if he would break from Silajdzic, as his has failed to deliver on similar promises in the past. We will continue to engage interlocutors from SDA and other parties to support the urgent conclusion of a police reform deal. End Comment

Note on Tihic's Health

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¶6. (C) Despite having had hip replacement surgery two weeks ago, Tihic seemed alert, in good spirits and able to walk quite well with the help of a crutch. He related that he had suffered hip problems for some time, an operation received years ago in Belgrade had not helped, and that mistreatment in a Serb concentration camp during the war exacerbated his hip problem. He explained that he had been in excruciating pain for several months after overexerting himself at the Srebrenica peace march in July. He told us that his doctor, marveling at Tihic's ability to quietly put up with pain and suffering, exclaimed that this was surely a reason Alija Izetbegovic had deemed Tihic as his successor. Tihic said he felt better although still had trouble sleeping at night due to pain. End Note on Tihic's Health.

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